

Time is wealth: Part-time work as a means to foster sustainable lifestyles?

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In the ongoing discussions on how to foster societal transformation towards sustainability, the reduction of working hours has been gaining increased scientific and public interest. In this context, a shift to lower incomes coupled with more time to spend in self-determined ways might foster lifestyles that are less material-intensive and thus more sustainable, without impairing individual well-being (Schor, 2010). A lower environmental impact has been linked to shorter working hours on a macroeconomic level (e.g. Knight, Rosa, & Schor, 2013) and to lower income on an individual level (e.g. Druckman & Jackson, 2016). However, little empirical research so far has examined the wider relationships between working hours, income, environmentally significant behaviour, and individual well-being (exceptions include Kasser & Sheldon, 2009). Our study research aims to investigate whether and under what conditions the self-determined reduction of working hours can foster more sustainable lifestyles.

Our contribution at SCORAI 2018 will present the results of the first part of a broader, mixed-method research project (AP1), which consists of a study in which we conducted 17 qualitative semi-structured guideline interviews with employees that had reduced their working time by at least 20% in the last two years. These interviews were then subject of a qualitative content analysis. Our results will offer insights into the profiles of the interviewees' available time, financial situation, consumer behaviour as well as subjective well-being and, more importantly, into the nature of the various interconnections between these elements. The results also include the identification of factors that influence these interconnections, such as the various typologies of the employees who reduced their working time, structural limitations and catalysts to reducing working time, the link between values and behaviour, as well as gender stereotypes.

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